

EXORCISING THE PHANTOM KANGAROO

CHAD ARMENT

Phantom kangaroos and wandering wallabies (sometimes called UHOs, or Unidentified Hopping Objects (Anonymous 1975)) are a staple of Fortean zoology, though their mysterious reputation has taken a hit in recent decades. Authors of weird phenomena traditionally emphasized the strangeness of encountering an Australian native in the good old USA (and Canada), while downplaying mundane explanations:

“Ohio produced a flurry of phantom cat reports in 1965. Three years later, police were chasing a phantom kangaroo from one end of the state to the other. It, too, got clean away.” (Keel 1970)

“The first explanation in every case is that it must have escaped from some circus or zoo. The problem is that in all the cases, no kangaroos were reported missing and kangaroos do not act as these vicious meat eating creatures, nor do they have the ability to suddenly appear and vanish.” (Straub 2004)

“Too often the escapee theory has been used without any basis in fact, and we run across it many times in the kangaroo stories.” (Coleman 2001)

Online articles describe details like glowing eyes or animal mutilations, though if you closely examine the overall data, there's very little mention of such. That's not to say that there aren't interesting questions left to answer, but much of what has been published shows a significant bias that engages in a lot of hand-waving when reasonable objections are raised. The point of this article is to provide a more transparent examination of the subject of free-roaming kangaroos in North America. As I've noted elsewhere (Arment 2004), the rise of digital newspaper archives makes it far easier than it was decades ago to evaluate phenomenon over the breadth of this continent, for wider range of time, and hopefully come to sounder conclusions. First we'll start with the data.

The following accounts include a) known captives that escaped and were recaptured, b) known captives that escaped and were not recaptured (at least at the time of the last article found), c) captured animals with no known origin, d) uncaptured animals with no known origin, e) misidentifications of "kangaroo-like" animals, f) hoaxes, g) and the occasional vaguely kangaroo-like Whatsit. This allows us to see sighting reports in a proper cultural context, rather than just cherry-picking those stories that might fit a researcher's particular theory. (One thing to note, "kangaroo" might refer to a kangaroo, wallaroo, or wallaby, as size doesn't necessarily indicate species. A reported 3-foot-tall macropod might be an adult wallaby, or it might be a young kangaroo.)

SIGHTINGS AND CAPTURES

1843: North Dakota (pre-statehood). "How about that extraordinary animal the newspapers talked so much about, which made such a horrid noise, and took such amazing leaps, and looked like a kangaroo, and all that? Was there really such an animal found, or was it a hoax. Do tell." (Anonymous 1843b) This description refers to a newspaper hoax involving a strange new species that Audubon supposedly discovered about 10 miles north of Fort Union, a giant horned kangaroo-like creature. (Anonymous 1843)

- 1882: Pennsylvania. "A kangaroo is running loose in the wilds of Butler county." (Anonymous 1882)
- 1882: Indiana. "For some weeks Smith Jolly has been missing his chickens and he concluded to 'lay' for the intruder whatever it was and kill it. His wife saw what she supposed was a pet coon with a chain attached to its neck, in the yard, and Smith got his revolver and went into the yard to kill it. To his surprise something came skipping through the weeds which attracted his attention. When it approached to within a few yards of him, it arose erect upon its hind feet and appeared to him to be two or three feet high. He fired, but killed nothing, and the animal disappeared. He declares that it was a kangaroo or some animal of that specie." (Anonymous 1882b)
- 1889: California. A kangaroo escaped from a Golden Gate Park corral, uncaptured at the time of the article. (Anonymous 1889).
- 1889: Missouri. "A strange animal is roaming around in Carter County, Mo., which, from description, is supposed to be a kangaroo that has escaped from some circus." (Anonymous 1889b)
- 1891: Pennsylvania. "An animal of a dark gray color and about five feet high, which leaps about on its hind feet, is scaring the people of Amwell township, Washington county. It has been seen by a number of people, and the general opinion is that it is a kangaroo escaped from some traveling menagerie." (Anonymous 1891)
- 1893: Pennsylvania. The Walter L. Main Circus train's infamous wreck near Tyrone, in Blair County, PA, killed 5 men and a number of animals. Several wild animals escaped, some quickly recaptured, but others roamed the area until they were killed by locals (like one "black panther") or just disappeared. "Perhaps the most unusual story of escaped animals came from Huntingdon county, when early in June numerous travelers who crossed Warrior Ridge between Huntingdon and Alexandria scarcely believed their eyes upon seeing a kangaroo hopping through the woods. How this animal managed to get so far away from its habitat in the antipodes was believed solved by the Main disaster. It later disappeared from this section and was

reported as being seen in Mifflin County. However, five years later, in the summer of 1898, John P. Swoope, among the last of old Pennsylvania trappers, reported seeing a new species of animal on Warrior Ridge, while making his rounds in gathering pelts. The aged trapper described this animal: 'Of the kangaroo order, with nose like a sheep, large eyes, short fore legs and long hind legs. When startled, stands upright on hind legs.'" (Rung 1943)

1894: North Carolina. "An escaped kangaroo created lots of fun and excitement at the fair grounds today. His mode of navigation was entirely new to these regions." (Anonymous 1894)

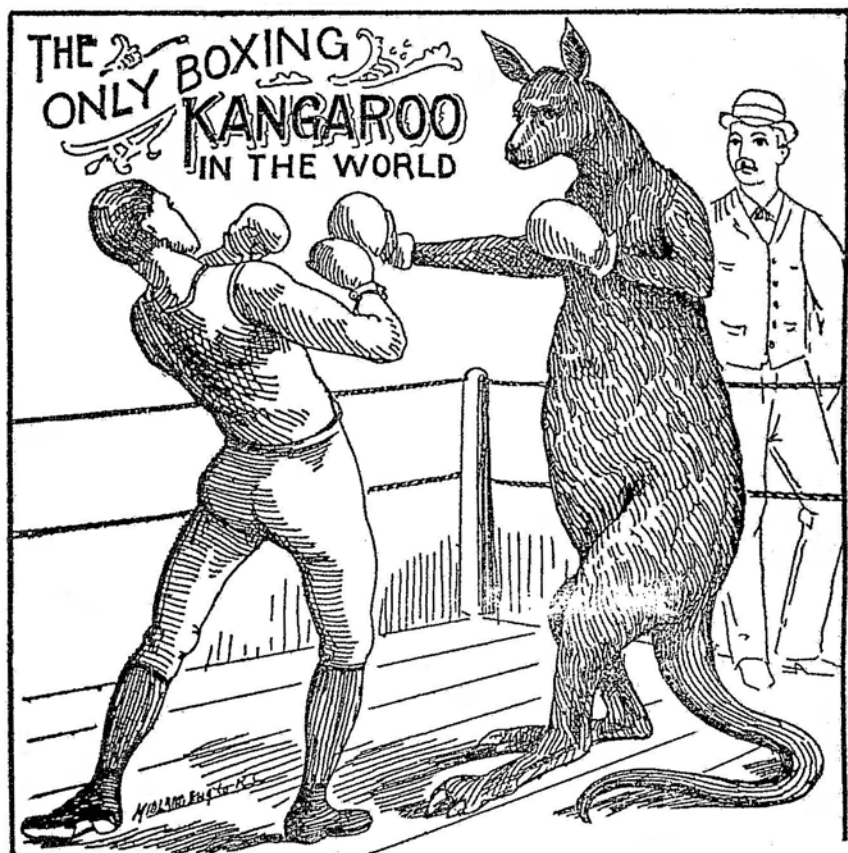
1897: New York. A Central Park Zoo kangaroo escaped its cage briefly before being recaptured. (Anonymous 1897)

1899: Wisconsin. A Mrs. Glover saw a kangaroo run through a neighbor's yard in New Richmond. This was noted in Robert Gollmar's book, *My Father Owned a Circus*, with Gollmar stating he didn't think the "kangaroo" was a circus escapee. (Coleman 2001; Rath 2005)

1900: New Jersey. A kangaroo-like creature "about the size of a small calf" and with a horrific scream was seen near Mays Landing. This may have more relevance to "Jersey Devil" folklore than to "phantom kangaroos," but there's little detail given. (Coleman 2001)

1901: Pennsylvania. "The statement that there is loose and running at large in the woods in the vicinity of Fay, a large animal resembling a kangaroo, is vouched for by S. M. Minner and Grant Redmon, residents of that vicinity. They passed the animal in the road but had no inclination to attempt to make it captive. It hopped about them and saluted them with its fore feet in a manner suggestive to them of a pugilist. They watched the antics of the animal from a safe distance for a while and then it became too dark to discern the direction it pursued in passing from the vicinity.

"Redmon and Minner had been spending the day at work at a saw mill in the vicinity and were walking home after the day's work. It was at a point on the road in the vicinity of Fay



Boxing Kangaroo! The only Boxing Kangaroo in the world! As the world grows older and wiser science teaches man the true nature of beasts. The above cut shows the exact position of **FIGHTING TOM**, (the Boxing Kangaroo), who was secured by Lemen Bros'. Foreign Agent at a cost of \$10,000.00. He will positively appear in the ring daily with his Trainer.

An 1894 advertisement for a "boxing kangaroo."

between the homes of Brooks Broadbent and Robert Clark, near an old watering trough to which it is supposed the kangaroo had stopped to refresh itself. At first the men were frightened at the animal and were particularly active in keeping a safe distance from it.

"Later on, however, it demonstrated by its antics that it was not dangerous at all and its capers were watched with interest. From the description given by the men it is safe to state that the kangaroo is one that has recently escaped from captivity." (Anonymous 1901)

1904: California. A kangaroo at the park in San Francisco escaped its paddock, and led police on a two-hour chase before disappearing into the trees. (Anonymous 1904)

1905: Maryland. A kangaroo and two deer were reported to have escaped from the Frank J. Robbins circus train at Edgemont when the cages hit the protruding roof of the station and were knocked off. Circus employees were unable to recapture the animals. (Anonymous 1905; Anonymous 1905b) A "Thirty Years Ago" note (Anonymous 1935) states: "A kangaroo escaped from a circus near Edgemont but was captured near Pen Mar by Samuel Wastler," so apparently a local man captured it.

1909: New Hampshire. "Fearing that a wild kangaroo which escaped from the battleship Wisconsin at the navy yard here [Portsmouth] yesterday, would kill some one, posses of sailors from the ship and citizens are today searching the woods about Dover and South Eliot, Me., for the animal.

"The animal escaped last night, and was seen about 6 o'clock going through South Eliot by E. F. Staples, a merchant. It is thought that the kangaroo is in the woods outside of Dover, and to-day City Marshal Adams has officers searching the woods." (Anonymous 1909)

1910: Pennsylvania. A boxing kangaroo named Jeff Fitz escaped from the Casino, leading to a "brisk chase" through the streets before he was recaptured. (Anonymous 1910)

1910: Michigan. A religious commune, the House of David, in Benton Harbor maintained a zoo, from which one of their kangaroos escaped. A three and one-half mile chase down the railroad tracks finally led to its recapture. (Anonymous 1960)

1911: Illinois. A young kangaroo escaped from a cage that was being transferred from one circus train car to another. "It covered considerable territory in the yards before it was captured." (Anonymous 1941)

1912: New York. Melba, Barnum & Bailey's kangaroo escaped from Madison Square Garden before being captured with a "football tackle." (Anonymous 1912)

FELIX AND FINK

The Kangaroo Is Still Loose on the Town.



“Kangaroo on the loose” as a folkloric motif. (1912 comic strip)

1913: Kansas. The zoo at Riverside Park, Hutchinson, thought an 8-foot high fence would be sufficient for their newly arrived kangaroos. They were wrong, and ended up chasing one around the river front. It was recaptured and new fences were built. (Anonymous 1913)

1915: Pennsylvania. A Perkiomenville man had a wagon accident when his horse shied away from “an animal that looked like a kangaroo” that was “grazing by the side of the road, and seemed to leap at the horse as the wagon went by.” (Anonymous 1965d)

1916: California. “Kangaroo hunting in the snow-covered hills back of Lake Chabot will attract many bay city hunters to the

Australian bush rangers' sport since a mysterious marsupial was shot and wounded by A. Tamalier, Castro valley rancher, as it hopped in bewilderment in the snow.

"How the kangaroo came to be on the San Leandro hills and where it came from is a mystery. Tamalier noticed it as he went into the hills to attend his stock and at a distance took it for a coyote. When the kangaroo, alarmed at his approach, reared up and watched him intently and then went off bounding and leaping at top speed Tamalier could only gaze in astonishment.

"He returned home for his gun and following the trail of the mystery kangaroo came upon it again as it stood outlined against the snow at the top of a hill, resembling from a distance, Tamalier said, a picture of a chamois in the Swiss Alps.

"Far from its native haunts and plains the kangaroo was plainly at a loss and when followed, hopped about in one direction and then another. Tamalier succeeded in getting close enough to get in a shot, slightly wounding the kangaroo, which, however, was able to outdistance the hunter.

"Although still at large, it is believed the kangaroo may not long survive if exposed to the storm on the wind-swept hills. Tamalier believes it to be some pet animal which had escaped from its owner's home and had wandered into the hills."
(Anonymous 1916)

1916: California. A kangaroo brought for the exposition got loose in Mill Valley, delaying commuters before disappearing.
(Anonymous 1916b)

1916: Hawaii. "Kangaroos are roaming the hills back of Honolulu where none was ever seen before 1916. In that year a male and female kangaroo escaped from a private menagerie here and the other day they were seen in the Oahu foothills with a family of three little kangaroo in their train. So far no effort has been made to capture the animals." (Anonymous 1920)

1919: California. "Ten kangaroos escaping from bounds in Golden Gate park, San Francisco, played havoc with lawns and tennis courts." (Anonymous 1919)

CAPTURED BY KINDNESS



This is Mrs. Alice J. Farrell and her kangaroo. The kangaroo was hers only temporarily. Both were on the liner Sonoma, bound from Sydney for San Francisco, when two kangaroos in the cargo escaped. One was caught; the other all but bounded into the sea in a rage, before Mrs. Farrell smiled and coaxed it back into captivity.

That was after the kangaroo had sent one sailor flying with a left swing of the tail.

From the Bismarck (ND)
Tribune, Sept. 12, 1921.

1921: Washington. "Kangaroos are roaming the hills near the Yakima Indian reservation, where none ever was seen before.

"As circuses are rare in the northwest, Indians who have seen the queer creatures are frightened and superstitious lest some new power has invaded their domain.

"It is believed the kangaroos are from a private menagerie once kept in Yakima, from which a mated pair escaped.

"Every one expecting the animals to be recaptured or killed by dogs or coyotes, people forgot the incident.

"Now reports are made here frequently and in towns nearby of seeing the two adult animals crossing the hills with three little kangaroos in their train. It is not certain whether these five are the only ones.

“The nature of the vegetation along the valley of the Columbia river and the semiarid climate make this region a suitable habitat for kangaroos.

“As they are harmless and live on forage of little use to man and disdained by other beasts, it is the hope here that no one will molest them.

“At present the kangaroos are inhabiting one of the remotest and wildest regions of the sandhill country east of the Indian reservation.” (Anonymous 1921)

Noting that there is just a bit of language repetition (“three little kangaroos in their train”) in this and the 1916 article, I’m uncertain whether this is a newspaper writer’s fanciful take on that earlier story (which was based on a true event; the brush-tailed wallabies of Oahu are well documented (Hawaii News Now 2009; KITV 2013)), or if someone simply lifted that turn of phrase for a new story.

1923: Tennessee. “Scores of golfers and picnickers were put to flight when a big kangaroo got loose from the zoo at Memphis, Tenn., and romped through the city’s largest park here. Thirty-five men captured him.” (Anonymous 1923)

1926: Washington. A retired army officer’s pet kangaroo escaped for “three days and three nights of liberty” in Seattle. “One evening it hopped off a bank into the glare of an automobile headlight. The driver almost had a fit, but on opening his eyes the big ‘jack rabbit’ had disappeared into the night.” (Anonymous 1926)

1927: New York. Two kangaroos, reportedly escaped from the Bronx Zoo, were at large in Westchester County. The station agent for the New York Central Railroad saw them, claiming they “sneered and galloped” before departing into the woods, “they were galloping like mad up the railroad track in the moonlight,” stopping in front of the station. “I knocked on the window, and they looked at me and sneered.” Hunting posses were in pursuit, without success. (United Press 1927)

A few weeks after, two theatrical press agents claimed responsibility for the sightings, stating they had rented kangaroo

outfits for a publicity stunt, intending to allow themselves to be captured but finding the thrill of the chase too exhilarating. (Anonymous 1927)

1928: Minnesota. A kangaroo escaped from the Milwaukee Zoo, but was accidentally killed by a motorist during the chase. (AP 1928)

1931: Michigan. A “kangaroo” caught by a State Hunter turned out to be a lame coyote that had had its front legs amputated to stubs at the knee joints, evidently by a trap. (Anonymous 1931)

1934: Tennessee. “A mysterious animal described as ‘fast as lightning’ and like a ‘giant kangaroo’ is spreading terror through the Hamburg community.

“The creature first appeared Saturday night. It killed and partially devoured several German Police dogs. The next night it killed other dogs and a number of geese and ducks.

“Farmers in the community now carry their shotguns to the fields for fear of the beast and Negroes stay at home after night-fall. Others in the community are going about their daily work armed with pistols.

“The Rev. W. J. Hancock, negro minister, saw the animal. He said, ‘it was fast as lightning and looked like a giant kangaroo running and leaping across the field.’ It had just killed a large police dog and had left nothing but the head and shoulders of the victim in the owner’s yard.

“Frank Coxx also saw the thing. He said it was unlike anything he had ever seen but that it resembled a kangaroo more than anything else.” (AP 1934)

A “large long-legged mountain lynx” was killed by hunters on Signal Mountain, which they believed was responsible for the “kangaroo” sightings in Hamburg. (AP 1934b) Others, however, believed the “kangaroo” was still at large. “A farmer in the Battle Creek section of the county reported that several sheep were killed by the animal several days after the lynx was slain.” (AP 1934c)

Apparently, some local rival newspaper writers suggested the 1934 events were a newspaper hoax by Horace N. Minnis;

Loren Coleman (2001; 2010) pointed out that Minnis was not a correspondent for the Chattanooga Times in 1934. Coleman (2010) also noted a theory had been proposed that the animal killings were the work of a lone wolf in the area.

1935: Two Zanesville residents claimed to see a kangaroo “hopping out of a woods bordering Dresden road.” (Anonymous 1970)

1936: “A mysterious What’s-It is reported to be running around loose in the fields of P. E. Collier and Harold Hulbregtse about one-half mile east of this village [Hingham], but the strange and outlandish creature allows no one to get near enough to it to find out just what kind of animal it is.

“It was seen for the first time early this week and has been sighted several times since. Some describe it as a kangaroo-like animal, and others have expressed the opinion that it might be a deer.

“At any rate, it hops instead of walking or running and when approached by a human being, it hops speedily away into the underbrush or woods.

“Just when the mystery will be solved no one knows, for the What’s-It is a very wary and nimble creature. Attempts, however, will be made to corner it.” (Anonymous 1961)

1937: Pennsylvania. “A ferocious monster or ‘devil’ that looked like a kangaroo with a pair of prehistoric red eyes turned out to be a small silver fox. Chaney Ladley, who startled the surrounding rural area with a graphic description of the menacing critter, sheepishly identified the fox. It had escaped from a farm.” (AP 1937)

1939: New York. A small kangaroo escaped unnoticed from Prospect Park Zoo into the Brooklyn streets, where it was recaptured. (Anonymous 1939)

1940: Ohio. Louis Staub, a Greyhound bus driver, described an animal he saw in the bus headlights near Grove City that January: “It’s about 5 ½ feet high, hairy, and brownish in color. It has a long pointed head. It leaped a barbed wire fence and disappeared. It resembled a kangaroo, but it appeared to jump on all fours. I’m certain it wasn’t a deer.” (Coleman 2001)

1942: Ontario. "If the kangaroo reported seen near Georgetown, Ont., is the same one that escaped from a train here [Montreal] Tuesday, he must have been mighty mad at somebody. . . .

"The Australian airmen who first reported that their pet had jumped from a train at nearby St. Lambert appeared greatly heartened by news a kangaroo had been sighted near Georgetown. Their feeling seemed to be that it just might happen to be the one they were looking for.

"They can travel 60 miles an hour if they're mad,' commented one.

"On that basis, they figured it possible that the kangaroo they lost had covered the 400-mile stretch to Georgetown—if it stayed mad long enough.

"Available airmen were not sure, however, about the pet's ability to swim a long distance. . . .

"Maybe he hopped a fast freight." (Anonymous 1942)

1942: Wisconsin. "A full-grown kangaroo is loose in the Big Creek country, north of here, according to Frank Steffens, who lives just over the Sauk county line in Juneau county.

"Steffens reported that Mrs. Steffens and their son, Albert, noticed the animal in the pasture of a neighbor, Fred Sussex. The son first thought it was a fox and got his gun, but when he got within 20 rods of the animal it jumped over a fence and was last seen going through a grain field. It has not been reported by any other farmers.

"Steffens believes the animal escaped from a zoo or circus menagerie." (Anonymous 1942b)

1943: Connecticut. An Australian shop-owner's pet kangaroo escaped, but Hartford police recaptured it with a lasso and a "flying tackle." (UP 1943)

1950: Texas. Columnist J. H. McLean recounted a recent trip to the shore of Lake Buchanan. A camp visitor stayed until after dark, and McLean was walking him back to his camp with a flashlight: "We were approaching a big clump of prickly pear when a large creature, like nothing we had ever seen loose in America, bounded across our course. By the time I had flashed

the light it had disappeared in the cedar about 100 yards from the lake, positive, it was not a coon. It was much too large for an armadillo. We couldn't figure out what it was and finally you exclaimed:

“It looked like one of those Australian animals—a kangaroo.’

“So it appeared to me.”

The next morning, McLean found tracks of a large raccoon at the spot where they saw the creature and suggested that that might be the culprit. (McLean 1950)

1950: Pennsylvania. “Scores of excited folks” joined a two-hour chase after a loose kangaroo, which was finally cornered by a policeman. (AP 1950)

1950: Texas. Not an escape, but the kangaroo mascot of the Austin College football team was kidnapped by some Austin College students hoping to spur rivalry with Abilene Christian College. Katy the kangaroo was returned. (Parris 1950)

1952: Wisconsin. “Madison police late Monday were checking a report from a woman near Vilas park zoo that a kangaroo escaped from its pen and was on the island in the lagoon.

“The woman told police she saw the animal hopping around the island, but police were unable to locate the kangaroo.” (Anonymous 1952)

1955: California. A 14-month-old kangaroo on loan to a television station from the San Diego zoo escaped, but was recaptured the next day. (AP 1955)

1955: Maryland. A kangaroo escaped from its zoo handlers for an hour after a television appearance in Baltimore. “Once she cleared the hood of an automobile with a beautiful leap.” After a five mile chase, she was finally cornered. “Arthur Moore of the Baltimore Zoo was kicked in the stomach and his colleague, Ben Geary, was bitten on the arm.” (AP 1955b)

1955: Oklahoma. “‘I just saw a kangaroo on Northeast 234d,’ the caller, vocally shaken, telephoned police. Dispatcher C. D. Scott hopped to his duties, setting off a fullscale East Side safari of patrolmen headed by Julian Frazier, Lincoln Park zoo director. Frazier and his men spotted their quarry, hiding in the

brush, and jumped it. The animal turned out to be stuffed, apparently planted by a prankster.” (AP 1955c)

1956: New York. The Clark Moon farm in Petersburg, NY, was becoming an unofficial tourist attraction by people wanting a glimpse of “three animals claimed to be kangaroos, which have made their home in that area since spring.” The State Conservation Department was not investigating, as kangaroos were not in their “bailiwick.” “The three animals which have been sighted on various occasions since spring were last seen yesterday morning in a meadow near the Clark Moon residence.” (Anonymous 1956)

1957: New Hampshire. Several people in Walpole reported seeing a kangaroo-like animal. “Police say most of the reports are from housewives who say they’ve seen the strange-looking animal bounding through pastures and munching on roadside shrubbery.

“One housewife said he was hopping like a large rabbit with his ears ‘all a-twitching.’

“And a motorist who’d encountered the animal, cavorting through the countryside, said:

“‘I’m not saying it was a kangaroo, but it sure looked like a kangaroo.’

“State Trooper Louis G. Rogeau said he too saw the animal but was unable to overtake it.

“‘It hopped like a kangaroo. It sure wasn’t a deer or a dog. I spotted it in the Prospect Hill section. It was making long, loping jumps. It was like nothing I ever saw before around here.’

“Benson’s Animal Farm at Hudson reported they had no missing kangaroo but maybe it had escaped from some other animal farm.” (Anonymous 1957)

1957: Wisconsin. Two young boys in Coon Rapids claimed to see a pair of five-foot-tall kangaroos hopping through the woods off Highway 10. Additional sightings of “big rabbits” were collected from 1958 and 1967. (Coleman 2001)

1958: Nebraska. A 13-year-old Endicott boy, Max Troxel, reported seeing a kangaroo. “He speaks of the animal which gave his year-old coon hound a badly mangled ear.

“Max and his dog came upon the creature when they went to get the cows. The animals had it out, with the stranger standing on its hind legs to give battle.

“Then the creature took off, with the dog in pursuit.

“Max says the animal had a large tail and short light brown hair. It departed with great leaps and bounds.

“The boy and his father searched the property. The elder Troxel says they found tracks nearly a foot long, somewhat like a dog’s but with longer and wider spread toe prints.

“He said it appeared the animal traveled in leaps of 12 to 15 feet, and at one place cleared a creek with a jump of about 25 feet.” (AP 1958)

A similar animal was spotted the following week near Grand Island. “The strange, kangaroo-like animal reported seen near Endicott, Neb., last week was spotted Monday eight miles east of here along the Platte River.

“Charles G. Wetzel said he saw the animal as he was leaving his cabin and at first thought it was a deer.

“He said the animal, brown, about six feet tall, with large hind legs and small forelegs, bounded along the ground with its forelegs barely touching the earth.

“Tracks showed the hind feet to be six inches across at the widest part and it traveled in leaps of about 10 feet.” (UP 1958)

Loren Coleman (2001) had opportunity to speak with Wetzel about his sighting in the early 1980s. Wetzel initially saw the animal he thought was a deer chasing some dogs, but coming up to within ten yards of it, saw it was kangaroo-like, taking ten-foot leaps. It hung around his cabin for several minutes before taking off into an alfalfa field. Wetzel operated a brewery, and named one of his brands “Wetzel Kangaroo Beer,” a collectible that the International Cryptozoology Museum is still seeking.

1959: Kansas. “A Flint hills kangaroo is fast becoming as much talked about in the Sedan city lake area as was the monster at Scotland’s Loch Ness.

“The animal has been spotted by six persons in the last two weeks.

“The latest to see the kangaroo is Mark Griffith, caretaker at the lake, who said he sighted the animal bounding across a pasture west of his home.

“It was in the same area where three Sedan women, Mrs. Earl Gray, Mrs. John Warring and Mrs. Dale Carpenter, and Mrs. Carpenter’s two sons, had seen the animal earlier.

“Clem Gillespie, state game warden, said he is no authority on kangaroos and has no plans to try to capture this one. He said he has been in the lake area several times in the last two weeks trying to get a glimpse of the animal, but has not seen it.

“Residents of the area theorize the kangaroo escaped from a circus that passed through here about two weeks earlier.

“Gillespie said he feels sure the kangaroo can survive in this area, as it is a browser in the same manner as deer, of which there are several in the section between K99 highway and the lake.” (Anonymous 1959)

Two Sedan men arranged for a kangaroo hunt (without guns or dogs) to look for the animal and establish if it did in fact exist. (Anonymous 1959b) The search failed to come up with anything, though Clem Gillespie noted pranksters had set up a couple cardboard kangaroo silhouettes near the area where the hunt was to begin. (Anonymous 1959c)

1960: Maryland. A kangaroo escaped from its cage at the Hagerstown shopping center. When captured in a cornfield she was found to have given birth to a Joey. (AP 1960)

1960: Virginia. A woman saw what she thought was a kangaroo hopping through a field and jumping over some fences. A 1962 outdoors column suggested that it may have been a deer with one or both legs shot off at the knees, as a dead deer had recently been found with one leg with such a wound. “It had healed over nicely, but the deer must have become mired in the mud of the pond and was unable to get out.” (Slaven 1962)

1961: Florida. A kangaroo escaped from its cage at the Miami airport, but was eventually recovered. (UP 1961)

1962: Ohio. A Portsmouth woman was the victim of a series of mean-spirited practical jokes, threatening calls, and a vandalized car; one prank involving an unidentified woman flagging

down a fire vehicle and, claiming to be the victim, said she had lost her pet kangaroo. (Bennett 1962)

1962: Michigan. A three-foot-tall, six-month-old kangaroo went missing from a children's zoo on Belle Isle, only to reappear in an appliance store in Southgate 13 miles away the next day. Detroit police suspect the animal was kidnapped and abandoned. (AP 1962)

1963: California. Weldon, the San Francisco Zoo's wallaroo was still wandering a week after his escape. There were plenty of sightings, but he was too fast for officials. (UP 1963)

1964: California. A call to the San Diego Zoo reported a kangaroo loose in the city, but the animal turned out to be a whitetail deer that had escaped from its zoo enclosure. (Anonymous 1964)

1964: Kansas. "A kangaroo escaped from a Kansas animal farm and is currently hopping about the prairie, which will probably lead to stories of how big the jackrabbits are if the hopper is spied by a visitor to the Sunflower state." (Fairbanks 1964)

1964: New Mexico. "A Hobbs mother and son reported seeing a kangaroo hopping across the road. That could have been one of those Pecos Valley jackrabbits that average about the size of a small kangaroo." (Burrows 1964) Mrs. Robert Hammond, actually of Oil City, near Hobbs, said the animal was light tan, had a sharp nose, and a huge tail. It held itself up off the ground as it hopped in "an odd, loping manner." It was about 4 ½ feet tall. (AP 1964)

1965: Indiana. A kangaroo at Fort Wayne's Franke Park Zoo escaped for a six-day romp until flushed out from a swampy area north of the zoo by a television crew. (AP 1965)

1965: Kansas. "An Abilene woman reported seeing a kangaroo on I-70 early Monday as she was on her way to work in Junction City.

"She said at first it looked like a large dog sitting on its hind legs near the ditch, then it leaped away.

"The Abilene Reflector-Chronicle received the report from Mrs. Robert Rader. Speculation is the animal may have escaped

from a small circus which has been traveling in the vicinity in recent days. (Anonymous 1965)

The kangaroo next showed up near Minneapolis, Kansas, when a Colorado couple reported seeing it. "They said they were driving near Minneapolis when they spotted what appeared to be a cow. As they approached, it hopped off the highway." (Anonymous 1965b) Two Kansas State students saw it "sitting on the edge of K82 highway east of Wakefield" as they were driving home from Manhattan one evening. (Anonymous 1965c)

1966: Texas. Floodwaters at the Gainesville Zoo led to attempted rescue of the animals; in the confusion two kangaroos escaped.

One was recaptured by a group of high school boys. (AP 1966)

1967: California. Two Pasadena policemen separately witnessed a three-foot-tall kangaroo one early morning. (Anonymous 1967)

1967: Washington. William Shearer reported a kangaroo in Puyallup. (Coleman 2001)

1968: Ohio. Highway Patrol officers north of Hamilton responded to a motorist reporting a kangaroo along I-75. They confirmed this when, on the way, the kangaroo hopped across the road in front of them. It was reported to have escaped from a traveling circus that had played at SR 122 and 63. The kangaroo went on its merry way north towards Lebanon. (AP 1968; UP 1968) This is apparently the "phantom kangaroo" that Keel (1970) claimed was chased by police from one side of the state to the other, but as can be seen, it really wasn't much of a flap.

1968: Michigan. One of the wallabies kept at the Michigan State University School of Veterinary Medicine escaped. (AP 1968b) This is probably the same account mentioned in Coleman (2001) about a kangaroo seen hopping around the MSU campus.

1968: Arkansas. A resident of the Highland Community on Hwy. 16 west of Fayetteville reported seeing a kangaroo jump a fence and head off into a neighboring yard. The Sheriff had no report of missing kangaroos. (Anonymous 1968)

1969: Maine. A "baby kangaroo" escaped from the Lewiston fairgrounds, leading to a slippery chase in the rain. The kangaroo

- got away, but a homeowner later found the marsupial resting in his garage and quickly shut the door on it. (AP 1969)
- 1970: Pennsylvania. A motorist stopped at the State Police substation in Clearfield to report seeing a kangaroo along I-80. (Keller 1970)
- 1971: Illinois. One of six wallabies at Hume's Scientific Small Animal Laboratory and Farm in Arlington Heights escaped for six days before being captured in Mount Prospect. Charles Hume stated, "I didn't realize it could run so fast because it had been so easy to catch in its cage. . . . I must have chased it for five miles." (Anonymous 1971) This is probably the same animal Coleman (2001) reported as an animal seen on the grounds of Northwestern University in Evanston.
- 1971: Illinois. The Richard Elliott family of Wheeling, IL, lost one of their wallabies, but hoped it would stay in the area because its mate was still on their property. (Anonymous 1971b)
- 1971: Kansas. An Abilene woman reported seeing a kangaroo near her home. (Coleman 2001)
- 1972: Ohio. Jett's Petting Zoo lost a kangaroo at a nursing home in Lorain, OH. It was finally cornered several blocks away. (Anonymous 1972)
- 1972: Texas. A wallaby escaped from a Kermit-area rancher's private zoo, confusing a local motorist who saw it cross the road in front of him. (AP 1972)
- 1973: Maryland. A kangaroo escaped from a zoo display at the Columbia mall. (AP 1973)
- 1974: Pennsylvania. A large kangaroo was seen in Bristol Borough, Bucks County, along Route 13. Police received five or six calls from residents about it. (Pettit 1974)
- 1974: Illinois. In the initial report of the best-known "Chicago kangaroo" sighting, six people had seen the 4 ½-foot-tall animal, including two policemen who met it in an alley early one morning. They tried to put handcuffs on it, but the animal started to growl, "scream," and "get vicious." One officer was kicked "pretty bad" in the legs, at which point they started punching the kangaroo in the head. As one noted, "Too bad we didn't

have our nightsticks there. Then we really could have hammered him.” As other officers arrived at the scene, the kangaroo hopped a fence and took off down the street. The animal had a pouch, so was undoubtedly female. With the description from witnesses, a Lincoln Park Zoo employee suggested it was likely a wallaby. (AP 1974) Later sightings included area residents seeing it rummage in garbage cans (AP 1974b) and a paper boy seeing it on his route. One teenage boy said, “He was a pretty big animal. I think he must have been about six foot tall. He was taller than me and I’m 5-foot-7.” (UP 1974)

The Chicago kangaroo story spread far and wide. President Ford used it in his speech at a Republican fundraiser in Illinois: “There’s a big controversy over what to do with him when they catch him. The Chicago police want to put him in the zoo and the Chicago Bears want to put him in the backfield. And, of course, the Democrats want to register him at least once.” (Anonymous 1974) The kangaroo was in the news long enough to be named Kinky. (AP 1974c)

Des Plaines police checked out reports in that area, without luck, and decided that a small deer was the likely culprit there. (Anonymous 1974b) Sightings cropped up in the Plano area (AP 1974c; UP 1974b) John Orr, a Plano policeman, nearly hit it as it crossed the road in front of him. Three Plano youths saw it sitting in a road before jumping a fence and disappearing into the woods. A young couple saw it on the southwest side of Chicago, and later a man saw “an animal about 4 feet tall leap from a two-legged stance into the woods” at a northwest side forest preserve. A trucker on a rural road near the Fox River saw what he thought was a kangaroo hanging out with three deer. The trucker stopped and looked at prints of the animal, noting they were definitely different and not deer-like.

One newspaper writes: “If there is a kangaroo, it’s a mystery where it came from. No one has reported one missing.” (AP 1974d) Another newspaper noted that a zoo in Moline, IL, about 100 miles southeast of Chicago, had reported a missing kangaroo about three months previous. (UP 1974b) Loren

Coleman (2001) noted that there were sightings in Plano and Chicago at approximately the same time, suggesting more than one kangaroo was loose at the time.

1974: Indiana. Later in the month, after the Plano, IL, kangaroo sightings dried up, a man in Rensselaer, Indiana, reported seeing a kangaroo hopping along the street, leading to the report that the Chicago kangaroo had headed south for the winter. (UP 1974c) That animal may have been a kinkajou, which was captured. (AP 1974e) (Certainly, those two animals don't look very similar, but a strange animal seen during a flurry of kangaroo sightings might be mistaken by someone who didn't know better.) Then there were reports of a kangaroo spotted by motorists on the north side of Indianapolis. (AP 1974e)

1974: Illinois, part 2. An El Paso, IL, man reported a kangaroo sitting by the side of the road as he drove into Normal one morning. It hopped into the Illinois State University farm field. (Anonymous 1974c) One woman in Chicago called police in November, saying there was a furry creature sleeping on her doorstep. Police rushed over thinking it might be the kangaroo, but it turned out to be a squirrel monkey, captured after a brief chase. (UP 1974d)

The Chicago kangaroo returned briefly, as two motorists reported seeing a kangaroo in Deerfield. Police didn't turn up anything. (UP 1974e) The director of the Lincoln Park zoo expressed skepticism that the kangaroo ever existed. (Anonymous 1974d) Oddly, when Phillip's Park Zoo had an aoudad escape the next year, Chicago police were puzzled that they never received any calls of people sighting Gertie, who eventually returned of her own accord. (AP 1975) Loren Coleman (2001) notes several additional sightings in the 1974 Illinois-Indiana kangaroo flap.

1974: Kansas. The Rice County Sheriff's office received a report that a kangaroo was seen in a park four miles east of Lyons along US 56. An officer sent to the scene didn't find anything, and suggested the man had seen a deer. The witness claimed the animal had a two-foot tail. (Anonymous 1974e; Anonymous 1974f)

1975: Illinois. A woman driving on Illinois 128 near Dalton City one morning saw a kangaroo hop across the road in front of her. "It was light beige, about 5 ½ feet in length, with pointed ears and a long tail." (AP 1975b)

Victor Holford, 17, in Du Quoin, Perry County, was in his garage when he heard a car skidding out on the street. He ran out, and saw a dog and deer-like animal running across the road as a car drove off. Thinking the animal might be hurt, he took a flashlight with him and headed across the street. As he got close, he realized it was a kangaroo. It took off down the road. Holford had heard a couple of friends talk about seeing a kangaroo at a farm a couple weeks earlier, and had scoffed. (Marcus 1975)

1975: California. A newsboy claimed to see a kangaroo hopping down a Fresno street, and Roeding Park Zoo had an empty cage. But, the director said their wallaroo wasn't missing, but was on a breeding loan, so the search was called off. (AP 1975c)

1975: Minnesota. Fifteen days after Wally the wallaby escaped from his cage at the Goodhue County Fair in Zumbrota, a farmer north of town found a wallaby in his chicken coop and brought it in to police headquarters. (AP 1975d; AP 1975e) Oddly, it apparently wasn't the right wallaby. Como Zoo director John Fletcher said, "Don't ask me how there could be two wallabies loose in Minnesota at the same time, but the captured wallaby is an entirely different species from our Wally. . . . This one is a sand wallaby. Wally is a black-tailed wallaby." (Anonymous 1975b) Finally, Wally was baited into a dog pen with lettuce on a farm about a half mile north of the fairgrounds. The extra wallaby turned out to be one of a pair bought by Zumbrota businessmen, apparently embarrassed by the wallaby hijinks; they were donated to the zoo. (AP 1975f)

1976: Tennessee. A Kingsport area motorist claimed to see a full-grown kangaroo cross the road in front of him. "She was kangaroo color, reddish brown." He and the car behind slammed on their brakes, got out and watched it go over the hill. They both agreed it was a kangaroo. Later, after consideration, both parties decided that it was probably a female deer. (Anonymous 1976)

- 1976: Illinois. Harry Masterson of Rock Island was walking his dog one early April morning when he encountered a 3-foot-tall kangaroo or wallaby. Police were unable to locate it. (UP 1976) Beverly Rasmussen and her college student daughter saw a kangaroo hopping through a farmer's field in Buffalo Grove. Police were unable to locate it. A spokesman for the Lincoln Park Zoo dismissed the Illinois sightings as "wishful thinking." (Anonymous 1976b) A kangaroo was later seen in a field west of the Honeywell factory along Rte. 53. (Swickard 1976) Loren Coleman (2001) interviewed Masterson, who said he had seen kangaroos at the zoo, and was confident in his identification.
- 1976: Colorado. Several people, including a police officer, saw a kangaroo near Clear Creek Canyon, in Jefferson County. (UP 1976b)
- 1978: Wisconsin. A woman in Waukesha reported seeing a car hit one of two kangaroos crossing the road; the one that was hit was able to get up and hop off. (AP 1978) A Pewaukee school bus driver reported seeing two kangaroos hop across the road. A week later, a family was eating dinner when they saw a kangaroo hop across their backyard. (UP 1978) A couple were driving at night in southern Waukesha County when they saw a kangaroo-like animal alongside the road. "They said the animal was about three and a half or four feet tall and about the color of a deer. . . . 'it stood up on its hind legs' and then jumped over a ditch and fled." The Milwaukee County Zoo was not missing any kangaroos. (AP 1978b) Two young men photographed a kangaroo in the brush near Brookfield. At least two other Brookfield residents had seen a kangaroo in their backyards. (AP 1978c)

We now know that the photographed kangaroo was a hoax photo. Kim Poeppey (pers. comm.) was taking a class led by a man who was also a museum taxidermist. They discussed cryptozoology, and she later showed him a book with the photograph of the Waukesha kangaroo. The man laughed and told her that he and his friends, seeing the media coverage of the kangaroo back in 1978, took one of the stuffed wallabies from



The Infamous Waukesha Kangaroo Photo

Following up on Kim Poepppey's investigation, I was able to confirm, after communication with the current vertebrate curator at the Milwaukee Public Museum and a former chief taxidermist, that the photograph shows the museum's one and only wallaby specimen. The photograph was taken by one of the museum's taxidermists as a prank.

the Milwaukee Public Museum, stuck it in some bushes in the back parking lot, and photographed it. He took Kim on a tour of the museum, showing her the wallaby they used, but laughing at her for her trouble. Kim initially wrote an article up (with photo of the museum wallaby specimen) for the now defunct *INFO Journal*. Unfortunately, that material ended up lost and unpublished due to the International Fortean Organization's infamous regime change. Kim sent the information to Loren Coleman, who published it as a theory in his revised edition to *Mysterious America* (Coleman 2001). I recently contacted the vertebrate collections manager at the Milwaukee Public Museum, and she confirmed that they had a wallaby specimen that looked like the animal in the photograph.

1978: Wisconsin. In a different part of the state, a woman in Eau Claire County spotted a man-sized hopping creature crossing Hwy. 12 between Augusta and Fall Creek. (Coleman 2001)

1978: Indiana. A pet kangaroo escaped from its Brazil, IN, owner; sheriff's deputies chased it through backyards before grabbing it by the tail. (AP 1978d)

1978: New Jersey. Walter the wallaby went on the lam after escaping from the Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City. (AP 1978e)

1979: New Hampshire. A kangaroo escaped from the petting zoo at a carnival and roamed the area for three days until tackled by the director of the Nashua Humane Society. The carnival was long gone, and the director said, "The owner told me if I found the kangaroo, I could keep it." The kangaroo was sent to the Benson Animal Farm near Hudson. (Kendall 1979)

1979: Ontario. A police officer in Scarboro, near Toronto, claimed to see a kangaroo. (Coleman 2001)

1979: New Brunswick. A wallaby was seen over a 60-mile radius of Newcastle over several months time. (Anonymous 1979)

1979: Delaware. A dark-colored kangaroo was seen near Concord. (Coleman 2001)

1980: California. A wallaroo escaped from the San Francisco Zoo; officers chased in their car and tried to head it off, without success. Finally, they were able to capture it with a lasso. (AP 1980)

- 1980: Maryland. A couple spotted a wallaby near Sandy Point State Park. (Boyce 1980)
- 1981: Utah. A Cedar Fort, Utah County, rancher, Ray Ault, was checking on his sheep up a canyon when he saw kangaroo leaping six feet into the air. (Coleman 2001)
- 1981: Oklahoma. A man entered a Tulsa café and ordered coffee, telling the waitress and a couple of patrolmen he had just hit a kangaroo. They went outside and looked in his truck bed to see what appeared to be a 3 ½-foot kangaroo. The man said there had been two of them in the road, but only one was hit. He drove off with the animal and remains unidentified. An Owasso family, seeing the news, said they had had to dodge similar-sized kangaroos while delivering early morning newspapers. (Coleman 2001; UP 1981) Later, a Patagonian cavy was captured in Tulsa. Coleman stated that it frequently occurs that “an exotic animal, which could not realistically be confused for the reported creature, is captured, and officials and the media then use the alien animal to ‘explain away’ the mystery beast sighting. . . . What this particular South American rodent was doing in Tulsa, Oklahoma, no one could guess, but it fits well into the pattern of such Fortean events.” Now, a Patagonian cavy is a common exotic pet (not as common as guinea pigs, but more common than capybaras, which are also available), so there’s no real mystery about that. And, cavy do lope a bit like rabbits when they run, so they might in fact be mistaken as a small kangaroo by someone who doesn’t know better. (Unless you’ve worked with exotic animals, it really is difficult to grasp how poorly some people recognize certain species.)
- 1981: North Carolina. A kangaroo was spotted near a Biltmore motel. (Coleman 2001)
- 1981: California. A paranormal website posted this account. “Brian Joseph of northern California had sighting in 1981 in area where ‘screaming’ was heard in the woods: ‘I caught sight of something in a clearing about 200 feet away from me. I thought that it was a deer sitting down the same way a dog sits down. My dog caught sight of it the same time I did and started to run towards it. [That’s] when I realized that it was not a deer, it

took huge hops, looked like a kangaroo and let out a repeated burst of the sound that I had been hearing for months. The dog chased and the thing hop/leaped and turned. The dog followed a bit into a brush area and then came back out, the same as other times that the sound had been heard. This was in the days before the internet so trying to find out information on it was not easy. I tried to find out what type of sounds kangaroos make and anything I found never mentioned a bird like noise or anything like that. I also wondered if it was somehow associated with a UFO that myself and another person had witnessed in the area in late 1980.” (Hanks 2009)

1984: Michigan. A woman driving near the Detroit airport saw a kangaroo cross I-94. Sheriff’s deputies reported seeing it the next day. (Coleman 2001)

1984: Nova Scotia. A Bridgetown man saw what he thought was a small kangaroo, about two and a half feet tall. (Coleman 2001)

1985: Arizona. A wallaby escaped from a group of animals being transported to a zoo in Mexico, after punching one of the drivers. “It was last seen jogging north in Tucson.” (AP 1985)

1985: Kentucky. Two wallabies escaped from the Louisville Zoo. One was recaptured soon after. (AP 1985b)

1985: Maine. Hurricane Gloria caused extensive damage to the Wild Kingdom animal farm in York, allowing three wallabies to escape. After three months of freedom, two of the wallabies (“really chubby” . . . “they were living off the grass, having a grand old time”) were recaptured. (AP 1985c)

1988: North Dakota. A jogger passing the Dakota Zoo ran into a loose kangaroo and herded it back to the zoo. (AP 1988)

1988: Indiana. A wallaroo from the Indianapolis Zoo led keepers on a 20-minute chase through city streets before being captured. (AP 1988b)

1990: Mississippi. Dixie Farm, north of Jackson, lost two Bennett’s wallabies. They were spotted by Jackson residents, including children on a school bus. (AP 1990)

1991: Illinois. “A kangaroo-like animal was sighted in Oakbrook Terrace about seven months ago . . . but the animal either ran off too fast for police or did not exist. The mammal allegedly as

walking on Roosevelt Road from the Drury Land Theatre.”
(DeFotis 1991)

1993: Indiana. Mookie the wallaroo escaped from the Indianapolis Zoo and was chased for 20 minutes downtown before being netted. (AP 1993)

1993: Indiana. A man driving on US 24 near New Waverly hit and killed a wallaby that had escaped from Wright Way Farms a few days prior. (Anonymous 1993)

1993: Ohio. A Grafton couple saw a kangaroo one Sunday morning on their way to church. It was about 2 feet tall, had a long tail, and hopped on its large hind legs with its forepaws held up. Lorain County sheriff's deputies were unaware of any missing kangaroos. (Simmons 1993)

1994: Illinois. A wallaby escaped for five days from a petting zoo at Goebbert's Pumpkin Farm. (Krol 1994; Krol 1994b)

1994: Pennsylvania. A pet wallaby escaped in Fairview Township, York Co. (AP 1994)

1995: Minnesota. Javier Martinez's 5-month-old kangaroo escaped from a Garrison campground, roaming loose for several days before being lured and recaptured by two local women. (AP 1995)

1999: Maryland. An escaped pet wallaby in Howard County ended up hit by a car on I-70. (AP 1999)

1999: Tennessee. A wallaby from a Brentwood-area exotic animal farm escaped. (AP 1999b)

1999: Iowa. An Ottumwa couple reported a kangaroo about 16 miles south of town. Davis County sheriff's department did not have any reports of missing kangaroos, and the local Wilderness Kingdom Zoo was not missing any. Mary Stangl said, "It was bouncing from the west side of the highway toward the east side. . . . Pat turned around to make sure he saw what he thought he saw, and watched it slowly bound across the road." (AP 1999c)

1999: Iowa. A Wellman woman checking on the cattle on her farm saw a kangaroo-like animal. "It looked like a deer, but it had a bigger belly and a boxy nose. The tail was too long for a deer." (Coleman 2001)

- 1999: Kansas. A female kangaroo escaped from an animal farm near Nickerson, but was hit by a car and killed. Several other kangaroos also escaped (a gate was accidentally left open), but were safely corralled and returned. (Anonymous 1999)
- 2000: Illinois. Several residents of Moweaqua wrote in to the *Golden Prairie News* weekly paper with kangaroo sightings. Apparently, sightings had regularly occurred for several years. An educational coordinator at the Scovill Zoo in Decatur noted, "Surviving over winter would be the tricky thing. . . . But if they could find good cover, good shelter and good forage, it is possible. Wallabies, for example, eat grass, plants, vegetation." (Reid 2000)
- 2001: Pennsylvania. Two wallabies escaped from the Twin Spring Farm Day Camp & School in Ambler. The male eventually returned on its own, but the pregnant female died from stress. (Anonymous 2001; Wartenberg 2001)
- 2003: Texas. A pet Dama wallaby escaped from a New Braunfels home. It was the second time Bouncer had escaped this year. (Bowlin 2003)
- 2003: Nevada. Wayne Newton's pet wallaby escaped and led police on a two-mile chase through south Las Vegas. A local cowboy lassoed it. (AP 2003)
- 2005: Wisconsin. Iowa County Sheriff's Department received multiple sightings of a kangaroo along Hwy. 18-151 east of Dodgeville just a few days after the new year. One witness was a wallaby owner, though that one wasn't missing. (Jaeger 2005) The red kangaroo was eventually captured on a local farm, though no one had stepped forward to claim it. (Jaeger 2005b) A month later, officials still hadn't found the owner, though they had inquiries from Appleton, WI, and Connecticut from kangaroo owners who had lost their pets the previous year. But, this didn't match the current kangaroo, which appeared to have been loose for only a short time. (Jaeger 2005c) Eventually the kangaroo was adopted by the Henry Vilas Zoo. (Just Ask us 2005)

- 2005: Kentucky. Members attending a homemaker's club meeting in Poole, KY, noticed a small kangaroo hopping along at about 25 mph, going south on US 41-A. (AP 2005)
- 2005: West Virginia. For several months a small kangaroo was seen wandering near Charleston. Someone in the area did own kangaroos, but didn't want to claim this one. (AP 2005b)
- 2005: Indiana. A kangaroo was reported hopping near the South Bend airport, and an animal control officer confirmed it with a sighting. An official search was made, but without success. No missing kangaroos were reported. (AP 2005c)
- 2007: Pennsylvania. A wallaby was reported seen near Fleetwood, Berks County. Its origin was unknown. (AP 2007)
- 2007: Texas. A young red kangaroo escaped from a backyard for a little while, until recaptured. (Anonymous 2007)
- 2011: Missouri. A pet wallaby was recaptured after hopping loose around Platte City. (AP 2011)
- 2011: Alberta. A pet wallaby escaped from its owner in Onoway, in northern Alberta. (Thompson 2011)
- 2012: New York. State police were searching for a kangaroo-like animal seen along the Thruway near Syracuse. (WSYR-TV 2012)
- 2012: Washington. A Franklin County exotic animal owner lost his kangaroo, which was seen hopping near the highway until its owner chased it down. (AP 2012)
- 2012: Oklahoma. A Shawnee resident lost her young pet kangaroo, Lucy Sparkles, when it was spooked by a dog. (West 2012)
- 2013: Florida. A roaming five-foot, 200 pound kangaroo was tracked down by Sheriff's deputies after numerous calls. They hit it with a tranquilizer dart, then tried to Taser it, without seeming effect. Finally they tackled it. There was no clue as to where it came from. (WTSP 2013)
- 2013: Connecticut. A Ridgefield resident videoed a kangaroo or wallaby on his iPhone while on his way to work. It was standing in the middle of Route 116 before hopping away. (Anonymous 2013)
- 2013: Ontario. A baby kangaroo spent a day on the run in Bowmanville before being recaptured. It was part of an exotic animal therapy program for senior centers. (O'Meara 2013)

- 2013: Washington. A pet kangaroo escaped its Deer Park enclosure. (KHQ 2013)
- 2013: Texas. Sheriff's deputies helped round up an escaped kangaroo for its Midland owner. (AP 2013)
- 2013: Oklahoma. When an eastern Oklahoma hunter videoed a kangaroo in a cattle pasture, there was hope that Lucy Sparkles, lost the year before, had been seen. But, the escapee turned out to belong to another local kangaroo owner. (Anonymous 2013b)
- 2014: Florida. Animal Control chased down a kangaroo in an Orlando neighborhood. (CNN 2014)
- 2014: Quebec. A young kangaroo escaped from a zoo therapy farm in St-Lazere. (Anonymous 2014)
- 2014: Alabama. Madison County Animal Control managed to wrangle a Bennett's wallaby and return it to its Meridianville owners. (WAFF 2014)
- 2014: Utah. A LaVerkin family's pet wallaby escaped, but was rounded up in a cow pasture. (Jim 2014)
- 2014: New York. A wallaby escaped from its North Salem home. Sightings have been ongoing for eight months. (Corcoran 2014)

Now that we've got a good overall picture of roaming kangaroos, let's ask some questions.

Who keeps kangaroos? Traveling menageries as early as the 1800s (1700s in the UK) had kangaroos. One 1833 Boston *Morning Post* advertisement for Bailey, Brown & Co's "Grand Menagerie of Living Animals" included lions, a jaguar, a hyena, a hunting leopard (cheetah), a cougar, a mongoose, an alpaca, a llama, various primates, and a kangaroo. They were very popular exhibit animals with zoos (including petting zoos), as well as circuses and smaller roadshows (e.g. "boxing" kangaroos). But they have also been very popular exotic pets, and there were many small exotic game farms keeping and breeding them. They still do today—last year I attended an exotic animal auction in northeastern Ohio where a number of kangaroos and wallabies were auctioned off, from "bottle babies" to full-grown adults. (There's nothing quite

like watching an Amish man dragging a full grown kangaroo around a floor by its tail.) The idea that “mystery kangaroos” have no reasonable origin explanation is just false.

Are escapes uncommon? If this list shows anything, it is that not only are kangaroos widely kept, and have been for a long time—but escapees are fairly common. Sometimes those escapees are recaptured, sometimes they aren’t. And it isn’t at all unlikely that an embarrassed animal owner might prefer to remain unknown once they see that an escaped pet has hit the newspapers. This is particularly true if they live in an area where they technically may not be allowed to keep a macropod. Many jurisdictions, particularly cities, have exotic animal ordinances. And, of course, they might be worried about being sent a bill for public services rendered in the capture of the animal. But there’s another reason an owner might remain quiet. In reviewing these newspaper cases, one common element comes up time and again: owners don’t want people chasing after the escapees, because that could easily send the kangaroo flying off into the woods (and possibly stress the animal out, which could be dangerous to the animal). Owners often take a wait-and-see attitude, hoping the animal will eventually return on its own (particularly if there is a mate still in the enclosure).

Can someone really misidentify another animal as a kangaroo? Of course. There was a time in the eastern US when whitetail deer were almost extirpated from some states, so were unfamiliar to a lot of people. Because they share similar coloration and are about the same size as an adult kangaroo, a loping deer was sometimes mistaken for a kangaroo. As seen in the list, a few other animals with unusual gaits could be mistaken for macropods. Which leads to another question: *What about the cryptozoological angle?* Some cryptozoology researchers have speculated that many kangaroo sightings (when not proven to be a true kangaroo) could be of an unknown leaping primate with kangaroo-like features (i.e. Devil Monkeys). At this point, I have seen only poorly developed speculation with little good evidence for such. There are a few “leaping primate” sightings that are certainly interesting, but

until better evidence arises, I don't think that a "kangaroo-like" morphology is part of that folklore. For example, the 1934 Tennessee "killer kangaroo" account doesn't appear to be kangaroo related. There's nothing in those accounts that actually describes the animal, so saying it looked like a kangaroo is without any actual foundation. (The alleged eyewitness who said it looked like a "giant kangaroo" didn't actually describe it; we have no way of comparing what he thought he saw to an actual kangaroo.)

The poster child for the "phantom kangaroo" is probably the 1974 Chicago animal. One of the main reasons I've seen given that this must have been something "anomalous" is that the animal growled and put up a fight when cornered by the two policemen. But I've never seen anyone advocating for a non-kangaroo explanation asking the simple question: *Can kangaroos growl?* Why, yes, they can, and you can go to YouTube and hear an "angry kangaroo" growling at a videographer. (Fullard 2008)

This casual dismissal of reasonable explanations by Forteans is a form of hyper-skepticism that we also see in pop skeptic communities today. It's a little ironic that the 1974 Chicago kangaroo was dismissed as an imaginary animal by the Lincoln Park zoo director (Anonymous 1974d), apparently ignoring the close encounter by two Chicago cops, while the same animal is implied to be something extraordinarily strange by some Fortean writers. The facts themselves point to a different conclusion. If it looked like a kangaroo, leaped like a kangaroo, growled like a kangaroo, and fought like a kangaroo—it was probably a kangaroo. We don't need skepticism so much as we need critical thinking. (What I particularly find interesting is that only a few years prior, there were two separate cases of wallabies of known origin escaping in the Chicago area, but there's no mention of such in the 1974 newspapers or in most popular reviews of the case.)

Are there feral populations of kangaroos in North America? There is no evidence of such that I can determine. Most sightings occur for a season, then the animal disappears—it is rare to see ongoing annual sightings. This is likely due to few cases of multiple escapees, so there's little chance to colonize. The feral Oahu

wallabies descended from a single pair, and there are introduced populations in the UK (Connolly 2014; McCarthy 2013; Collins 2010; Cramb 2009), so it could be possible under the right conditions for kangaroos or wallabies to survive and breed in some parts of the US, but I've not seen anything indicating that has happened. (And there are enough hunters out there that we'd likely see mistaken kills during deer season.)

In gathering and examining the data on free-roaming kangaroos in North America, I believe the following conclusions are logical and reasonable with the data at hand:

- 1) It is no longer viable to claim that escaped kangaroos are relatively rare. In fact, after weeding out likely misidentifications, this is the most logical explanation and one that is well supported by data.

- 2) There are a number of cases where a kangaroo is claimed to be seen, but little description is given to corroborate the identification. Researchers should not force an identification or a speculative theory onto a sighting. It may be frustrating to have little to go on, but a sound theory cannot be built on poor data.

- 3) There are a number of early Fortean cases with "phantom kangaroos" that actually had a known escape origin or even a capture event. (As I noted before, modern digital archives allow us to find more data on many of these sighting reports.) In the absence of specifics, researchers should be careful not to overspeculate. There are probably more cases of "mysterious, disappearing" kangaroos in the Fortean literature that actually did end up with captures, but we haven't yet come across those reports (or they may not have been published at all).

- 4) Researchers should carefully examine the arguments of Fortean and Skeptics alike; too often there is self-rationalizing argumentation that serves only to bolster a preferred theory or an individual's past (and often limited) experience.

- 5) Yes, there are cases with unanswered questions. Generally, I haven't included accounts where, for example, obviously primate-like animals were seen "hopping." Those require their own analysis;

in any case, we shouldn't force those and "phantom kangaroo" sightings into the same category.

Looking to buy a kangaroo, wallaroo, or wallaby? Check out:

Tri Lakes Exotics (www.trilakesexotics.com)

Schreiner Farms (www.schreinerfarms.com)

Buffalo Hill Exotics (www.buffalohillexotics.com)

Fall City Wallaby Ranch (www.wallabyranch.org)

Deer Park Exotics (www.deerparkexotics.com)

Dave's Animal Farm (www.davesanimalfarm.com)

But don't buy one without checking your state and local regulations and making sure you have adequate resources for housing and care. (They don't make good indoor pets, folks.) Potential owners should pick up a copy of David McCauley's *Macropods: Their Care, Breeding and the Rearing of Their Young*.

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